

Message Text

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FM USINT BAGHDAD

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AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T BAGHDAD 1653

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR IZ IR US

SUBJECT: IRAQI-SOVIET RELATIONS

REF: TEHRAN 10827 (NOTAL)

1. IF APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITY ARISES, WOULD APPRECIATE IT
IF AMBASSADOR HELMS WOULD ATTEMPT TO DRAW SHAH OUT ON
SPECIFICS OF HOW IRAQ IS ACTING AS SURROGATE OF SOVIETS.
AS WE SEE IT FROM BAGHDAD, IRAQI REGIME CONSISTS OF GROUP
OF PRICKLY AND HARDENED REVOLUTIONARIES WHO ACCEPT SOCIALIST
PRINCIPLES BUT ACT VERY MUCH ON THE BASIS OF THEIR OWN
PERCEPTIONS OF IRAQ'S NATIONAL INTERESTS. THEY ARE A DIFFICULT

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BUNCH TO DO BUSINESS WITH, AND WE DOUBT THAT THEY CHANGE
THEIR STRIPES WHEN DEALING WITH THE RUSSIANS. AS USG HAS

FOUND OUT IN PAST, ROLE OF ARMS SUPPLIER DOES NOT, IN ITSELF GIVE SUPPLYING COUNTRY CONTROL OVER POLICIES OF RECEIVING STATE, PARTICULARLY IN SITUATIONS WHERE RECEIVING STATE PERCEIVES ITS OWN NATIONAL INTERESTS TO BE AT STAKE.

2. AS FAR AS SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR GULF ARE CONCERNED, THERE IS UNDOUBTEDLY A PARALLEL INTEREST BETWEEN IRAQ AND THE SOVIET UNION IN THAT BOTH COUNTRIES, FOR REASONS OF THEIR OWN, WOULD PREFER THAT IRAN NOT BECOME THE DOMINANT POWER IN THE AREA. IN OTHER PARTS OF THE MIDDLE EAST, HOWEVER, AS WELL AS IN IRAQ'S INTERNAL POLITICS, THERE IS A DEFINITE AND INCREASING DIVERGENCE OF INTERESTS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. SOVIET SUPPORT FOR THE SYRIAN REGIME, SOVIET APPROVAL OF THE CAIRO SUMMIT, SOVIET ACQUIESCENCE IN THE SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON, AND THE SOVIET CALL FOR A RESUMPTION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE ARE ALL FACTORS ADDING TO THE CURRENT TENSION BETWEEN BAGHDAD AND MOSCOW. IRAQI REGIME HAS PUSHED HARD FOR MORE SOVIET SUPPORT IN ITS BITTER DISPUTE WITH THE SYRIAN REGIME BUT HAS LITTLE TO SHOW FOR ITS EFFORTS. WE HAVE HEARD THAT IRAQ WAS PARTICULARLY DISAPPOINTED THAT U.S.S.R. DID NOT GIVE IRAQ MORE HELP IN ITS DISPUTE WITH SYRIA OVER THE EUPHRATES RIVER WATERS.

3. BELIEVE WE SHOULD ALSO REMEMBER THAT BAATH PARTY IS AT LEAST AS MUCH ARAB NATIONALIST AS SOCIALIST. WE DOUBT VERY MUCH THAT IRAQ WOULD BE WILLING TOOL OF SOVIETS ON ANY ISSUE WHICH THEY PERCEIVE AS TOUCHING ON THEIR ARABISM. EMPHASIS ON ARAB NATIONALISM IS ONE PRINCIPAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BAATH PARTY AND COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRAQ. BAATH PARTY IS VERY JEALOUS OF ANY POTENTIAL RIVAL POWER CENTER AND KEEPS IRAQI COMMUNIST PARTY UNDER VERY CLOSE SURVEILLANCE. DEATH PENALTY IS IMPOSED ON A BAATH PARTY MEMBER WHO ALSO JOINS IRAQI COMMUNIST PARTY.

4. BAATHI REGIME IS ALMOST NEUROTICALLY SENSITIVE TO FOREIGN INFLUENCE OR PRESENCE AND KEEPS AT LEAST AS TIGHT A WATCH ON RUSSIANS AND EAST EUROPEANS IN IRAQ AS THEY DO ON WESTERNERS. THEY ALSO HAVE VIVID MEMORIES OF PAST

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MILITARY OCCUPATIONS BY TURKEY AND GREAT BRITAIN AND ARE PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO ANY SUGGESTIONS OF A FOREIGN MILITARY PRESENCE ON THEIR "SACRED" SOIL. THIS SENSITIVITY APPLIES TO THE SOVIETS AS WELL AS TO THE WEST.

5. LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, IRAQI ECONOMY IS NOW BECOMING INCREASINGLY INTERRELATED WITH WESTERN EUROPE, JAPAN, AND THE UNITED STATES. IMPORTS OF GOODS AND TRANSFERS OF TECHNOLOGY FROM THESE COUNTRIES CONTINUE TO CLIMB AS IRAQ'S ECONOMIC TIES WITH THE U.S.S.R. AND EASTERN EUROPE

BECOME RELATIVELY LESS IMPORTANT. WITH THE 1973 INCREASE IN OIL PRICES, IRAQ BEGAN EARNING ENOUGH FOREIGN EXCHANGE TO MEET ITS DEVELOPMENTAL REQUIREMENTS AND NO LONGER HAD TO DEPEND ON ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FROM THE SOCIALIST BLOC.

6. WE CAN UNDERSTAND WHY SHAH MIGHT SEE SOME ADVANTAGE IN ATTEMPTING TO CONVINCE USG THAT IRAQ IS HOPELESS TOOL OF THE SOVIETS, BUT BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL NOT TO ACCEPT THIS VIEW IN FORMULATING OUR OWN POLICIES. ON THE CONTRARY, THE GROWING TENSION BETWEEN IRAQ AND THE SOVIET UNION IS SOMETHING THAT WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO EXPLOIT TO OUR ADVANTAGE AS FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS UNFOLD.
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